

DISPLAY DEVICE FOR DISPLAYING MEMORIAL PRESENTATION

RELATED APPLICATIONS

5 The present application is a non-provisional patent application claiming priority benefit of a co-pending U.S. provisional patent application titled MEMORIAL CARDS, Serial No. 60/416,934, filed October 7, 2002. The identified provisional patent application is hereby incorporated by reference into the present non-provisional patent application.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. FIELD OF THE INVENTION

 The present invention relates broadly to display devices for displaying presentations. More particularly, the present invention relates to a display device
15 for displaying a memorial presentation, such as, for example, at a memorial service, viewing, or gravesite, wherein the device allows for a multi-page presentation; includes a passive illumination feature to enhance safety, emphasis, and navigation; and provides a variety of attachment or other support mechanisms.

20 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

 When a loved one passes, it is often desirable to display a remembrance or memorial presentation such as, for example, at a memorial service, viewing, or gravesite. It is known, for example, to display such presentations using plaques or small signs. Unfortunately, these prior art display
25 devices suffer from a number of limitations and disadvantages. Plaques, for example, are relatively expensive and may be difficult to move from, for example, a memorial service where it is temporarily displayed to a gravesite where it is to be permanently displayed. Furthermore, any attempt to minimize expense, size, or weight of the plaque directly limits the amount and type of information that can be
30 presented. Additionally, a plaque-based presentation is substantially fixed and

cannot be changed without incurring the expense and inconvenience of commissioning another plaque.

Simple signs, though less expensive and less difficult to move, suffer from a number of other distinct disadvantages, including, for example, an unsophisticated appearance that may be considered inappropriate or in bad taste by some and may even be banned by some funeral halls or cemeteries. This problem is exacerbated where it is desirable to display the sign at both an indoor memorial service and an outdoor gravesite. The former may call for a more subdued design and appearance, whereas the latter may call for a more emphatic design and appearance in order to be seen and special protective features in order to be preserved against the hazards of weather and the outdoor environment.

In light of these and other limitations and disadvantages of the prior art, a need exists for an improved display device for displaying memorial presentations.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention overcomes the above-described and other problems and disadvantages in the prior art by providing a display device adapted for appropriately and tastefully displaying a memorial presentation indoors or outdoors, such as, for example, at a memorial service or viewing or at a gravesite. The memorial presentation itself may be comprised of any suitable element or elements, such as, for example, a heartfelt message, a poem, an obituary, a photograph, a short biography, or any combination thereof.

The display device broadly comprises a display portion and a support portion. The display portion is adapted to receive, secure, retain, display, and protect and preserve the memorial presentation. The display portion includes one or more sleeves; a hinge mechanism; and a passive illumination feature. The one or more sleeves are adapted to receive and protect the elements of the memorial presentation. The hinge mechanism is adapted to combine, connect, or otherwise physical associate and retain the plurality of sleeves and allow for structured viewing

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of the associated elements of the memorial presentation. The passive illumination feature is adapted to enhance safety, emphasis, and navigation. Safety is enhanced by providing at least low-level illumination of the display device so as to guard against and eliminate any low-light (e.g., dawn or dusk) tripping hazard posed by the display device. Emphasis is enhanced by drawing attention to the display device and associated gravesite during low-light conditions. Navigation is enhanced by providing a distinct feature that assists in identifying the associated gravesite, particularly under low-light conditions.

The support portion is adapted to couple with and support the display portion in a desired location, elevation, orientation, or manner. The support portion advantageously provides a variety of support mechanisms to accommodate a wide variety of display environments. The support mechanisms of the support portion may include one or more of a hanger tab; a magnet; a hook-and-loop strip; and one or more legs.

Thus, it will be appreciated that the display device of the present invention provides a number of substantial advantages over the prior art, including, for example, being less expensive, easier to move, and easier to change than plaques, while also being more sophisticated and in better taste than simple signs. Furthermore, the device allows for presentations of varying lengths by simply adding more of the sleeves. Additionally, a wide variety of support mechanisms are provided for so that the device can be more effectively used indoors, outdoors, hanging or standing. Additionally, the illumination feature allows others to avoid tripping over the device and to more easily identify the associated gravesite, and tastefully enhances and emphasizes the presentation itself.

These and other important features of the present invention are more fully described in the section titled DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT, below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred embodiment of the present invention is described in detail

below with reference to the attached drawing figures, wherein:

FIG. 1 is a front view of a preferred embodiment of the display device of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a back view of the display device of FIG. 1; and

5 FIG 3. Is a fragmentary view of a leg and optional base portion of the device of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference to the figures, a display device 10 is herein described,
10 shown, and otherwise disclosed in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention. Broadly, the display device 10 is adapted for appropriately and tastefully displaying a memorial presentation, and may be used indoors, such as, for example, at a memorial service or viewing, or outdoors, such as, for example, at a gravesite in close in association with a grave marker. The memorial
15 presentation itself may be comprised of any suitable element or elements, such as, for example, a heartfelt message, a poem, an obituary, a photograph, a short biography, or any combination thereof, which, in light of the design of the display device 10, can be easily updated, changed, or replaced as desired.

In the illustrated preferred embodiment, the display device 10 broadly
20 comprises a display portion 12 and a support portion 14. The display portion 12 is adapted to receive, secure, retain, display, and protect and preserve the memorial presentation. The display portion 12 includes one or more sleeves 18; a hinge mechanism 20; and a passive illumination feature 22. The one or more sleeves 18 are adapted to receive and protect the elements of the memorial presentation.
25 Each sleeve 18 may include a pocket 24 or a frame 26 or both. The pocket 24 is adapted to receive a substantially flat or planar element of the memorial presentation, and is transparent or provides at least a transparent window through which the element may be seen. The pocket 24 is also substantially waterproof so as to protect or preserve the element against rain, moisture, other weather or
30 weathering effects, and other environmental hazards. The pocket 24 is preferably

openable so as to allow for easily accessing the element within the pocket 24, thereby advantageously allowing for updating, changing or replacing the element as desired. In one contemplated implementation, the pocket 24 is constructed from a material also able to resist or prevent transmission of ultra-violet or other
5 damaging solar radiation and the deleterious effects associated therewith, particularly with regard to fading of photographs or colored items . Thus, the pocket 24 may be constructed from transparent, treated plastic or another similarly suitable material.

The frame 26 is a border or frame also adapted to receive a
10 substantially flat or planar element of the memorial presentation. If constructed of sufficiently inflexible material (e.g., plastic, fiberglass, or metal) then the frame 26 may provide protection against bending, warping, or other undesirable physical changes to the element. The frame 26, however, will likely not, by itself, protect the elements of the memorial presentation against weather or the effects thereof. For
15 this reason, if no pocket 24 is used, the elements should be otherwise protected, such as, for example, by lamination.

As mentioned, the sleeve 18 may include both the pocket 24 and the frame 26 to provide a maximum degree and scope of protection against weather, the effects thereof, and bending, warping, or other undesirable physical changes of
20 and to the elements of the memorial presentation. This pocket-and-frame embodiment of the sleeve 18 may take the form of, for example, a substantially flexible transparent plastic pocket surrounded by a substantially rigid picture frame-type frame. In an alternative implementation, the pocket-and-frame embodiment of the sleeve 18 may take the form of a thin, openable (e.g., hinged) plastic case
25 having a substantially rigid frame and a transparent window for viewing the element of the memorial presentation.

It is contemplated that the display portion 12 may be substantially rectangular and have dimensions of approximately between 3 inches and 8 inches in width and 4 inches and 12 inches in height. The display portion 12 is not limited
30 to these dimensions, however, and, though illustrated as being substantially flat or

planar, it is also contemplated that the display portion 12 may alternatively be three-dimensional, such as, for example, pyramidal or cubical, being formed, for example, of folded plastic or laminated cardstock, in which case each of the top and vertical sides may present a portion of the presentation.

5 The display portion 12 may also include one or more through-holes 28 or other mechanisms (e.g., clips) for receiving and retaining remembrance, memorial, or otherwise symbolic ribbons or streamers. It is contemplated, for example, that red, white, and blue ribbons might, on Memorial Day, be attached to the display portion 12 in remembrance of a deceased veteran.

10 The hinge mechanism 20 is adapted to combine, connect, or otherwise physical associate and retain the plurality of sleeves 18 and allow for structured viewing of the associated elements of the memorial presentation. The hinge mechanism 20 operates in a conventional manner and may appear at and connect any side of the plurality of sleeves 18. As illustrated, for example, the hinge
15 mechanism 20 appears at and connects a top portion of the sleeves 18, though the hinge mechanism 20 could alternatively appear at and connect a left or right side portion of the sleeves 18.

 The passive illumination feature 22 is adapted to enhance safety, emphasis, and navigation. Safety is enhanced by providing at least low-level
20 illumination of the display device 10 so as to guard against and eliminate any low-light (e.g., dawn or dusk) tripping hazard posed by the display device 10. Emphasis is enhanced by drawing attention to the display device 10 and associated gravesite during low-light conditions. Emphasis is also enhanced where the passive illumination feature 22 provides sufficient illumination to assist in reading or
25 otherwise viewing the elements of the memorial presentation under low-light conditions. Navigation is enhanced by providing a distinct feature that assists in identifying the associated gravesite, particularly under low-light conditions. The illumination feature 22 may take the form of one or more strips or pieces of geometric, complex, or fanciful designs securely affixed to or incorporated into the
30 one or more sleeves 18 or the support portion 14. In one preferred implementation,

for example, the illumination feature 22 takes the form of strips of conventional florescent or "glow-in-the-dark" material affixed to the frame 26 portions of the sleeves 18.

5 The support portion 14 is adapted to couple with the display portion 12 and support the display portion 12 in a desired location, elevation, orientation, or manner. The support portion 14 advantageously provides a variety of support mechanisms to accommodate a wide variety of display environments, including, for example, indoor; outdoor; ground-based; or table-, mantle-, or shelf-based. The support mechanisms of the support portion 14 include a hanger tab 32; a magnet 10 34; a hook-and-loop strip 36; or one or more legs 38. Though illustrated in FIG. 2 as including all of these support mechanisms so as to provide maximum choice and flexibility of use, the display device 10 needs include only one or more of them.

 The hanger tab 32 is secured (e.g., as by glue or a rivet) to a top or back of the display portion 12 and projects upwardly or outwardly and includes a 15 clip, hole, or hook allowing for hanging the display device 10 either in a retail, on-sale context or in the context of its intended use (e.g., hung from a grave marker). The hanger tab 32 may be swivelable so as to swivel downward and out of sight when not in use.

 The magnet 34 is secured (e.g., as by glue) to a back of the display 20 portion 12 allowing for magnetically attaching the display device 10 to an appropriate surface (e.g., a metal portion of a grave marker). The hook-and-loop strip 34 is substantially similar to the magnet 34 and allows for attaching the device 10 to an appropriate material (e.g., a complementary hook-and-loop strip).

 The one or more legs 38 are coupled, either moveably or non- 25 movably, with a top, bottom, or back of the display portion 12, and are adapted to support the display portion in an elevated position. The number of legs 38 and their design will vary depending on the circumstances and conditions of display. Thus, the legs 38 may take any of a wide variety of forms, including, for example, one or two legs having pointed ends for insertion into the ground at a gravesite, or 30 three legs for stable support on a table at a memorial service, wherein the third leg

may be removable so that the remaining legs can be inserted into the ground at a gravesite following the memorial service. The legs may be coated or treated so as to resist rust, or may be constructed of non-rusting material (e.g., nylon or plastic). The legs may be short or long, and may be bendable so as to be shortenable for
5 use on a table and elongatable for use on the ground. When meant to be placed on stone or a similarly hard surface, rather than inserted into the ground, the legs 38 may have removable weighted feet 40. In another example, as seen in FIG. 3, there may be a single leg 38 having a threaded lower portion for threadable cooperation with a corresponding base component either adapted itself for insertion
10 into the ground or having a large, possibly weighted, base 42 so as to maintain the display device 10 in an upright position even during, for example, windy conditions.

In a first example of use and operation, the display device 10 of the present invention functions as follows. In anticipation of an upcoming anniversary of the death of a loved one, a person obtains the display device 10 of the present
15 invention. Three elements - a heartfelt message, a photograph, and a short biography - are to be included in the memorial presentation. The elements are placed within the pockets 24 of the sleeves 18, with the pockets 24 being surrounded by the frames 26. At the gravesite, the pointed end of the single leg 38 of the support mechanism 14 is inserted into the ground so as to maintain the
20 display portion 12 at a height of approximately two feet. Other visitors to the gravesite are thereafter able to view the memorial presentation as well. One visitor arrives at in the early morning and has trouble finding the gravesite until she sees the illumination feature 22. Another visitor arrives at dusk, sees the illumination feature 22 and thereby avoids tripping over display device 10. A few months later,
25 the person decides that a different heartfelt message is desired, so the person removes the original message from its pocket 24 and inserts the new message.

In a second example of use and operation, the display device 10 of the present invention functions as follows. In anticipation of an upcoming indoor memorial service and subsequent outdoor burial for a deceased loved one, a
30 person obtains a dozen or more of the display devices 10. Three elements - a

heartfelt message, a photograph, and a short biography - are to be included in the memorial presentation. The photograph, however, will be combined with the message, so that only two sleeves 18 are needed. The elements are placed within the pockets 24 of the sleeves 18, with the pockets 24 being surrounded by the frames 26. At the memorial service, one of the devices 10 is set upon a table and the remainder of the devices are distributed to other attendees. The device 10 set upon the table is supported by three legs 38 arranged in tripod fashion. At the gravesite, following the memorial service, the device 10 previously set upon the table is set upon the ground, again supported by the legs arranged in tripod fashion but with the weighted feet 40 attached to avoid the device 10 tipping over. Those devices 10 distributed to attendees are taken home as remembrances; some will be placed upon refrigerators and held in place by the magnets 34, other will be hung from nails or screws by the hook 32, and still others will be placed upon tables or shelves and supported by the legs 38.

From the preceding description it will be appreciated that the display device of the present invention provides a number of substantial advantages over the prior art, including, for example, being less expensive, easier to move, and easier to change than plaques, while also being more sophisticated and in better taste than simple signs. Furthermore, the device allows for presentations of varying lengths by simply adding more of the sleeves. Additionally, a wide variety of support mechanisms are provided for so that the device can be more effectively used indoors, outdoors, hanging or standing. Additionally, the illumination feature allows others to avoid tripping over the device and to more easily identify the associated gravesite, and tastefully enhances and emphasizes the presentation itself.

Although the invention has been described with reference to the preferred embodiments illustrated in the drawings, it is noted that equivalents may be employed and substitutions made herein without departing from the scope of the invention as recited in the claims. Also, though described herein as being used in the context of remembrance or memorial presentations, the display device may be used for a presentation for any activity or occasion, including, for example, births,

birthdays, and weddings.

Having thus described the preferred embodiment of the invention, what is claimed as new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent includes the following:

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